



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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Wildlife Biologists to Examine Cougar Found in Whiteside County

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Wildlife biologists will examine the remains of a cougar found on a farm near Morrison in rural Whiteside County in an effort to learn more about the animal's recent history and origin, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) announced today.

An IDNR Conservation Police Officer (CPO) on Nov. 20 responded to a call from a Whiteside County farm owner that a large cat had been seen exiting a corn field, running toward the farm owner's home and outbuildings. When the CPO arrived at the farm, he made contact with the farm owner's wife, who was in the house, and checked a horse barn and lot where the landowner's horses were located. The cougar was discovered in a concrete tunnel beneath a corn crib.

After consulting with the farm owner's wife and IDNR law enforcement and wildlife personnel, and at the farm owner's request, it was determined that the cougar should be euthanized. The CPO dispatched the animal with his IDNR-issued rifle. The cougar appeared to weigh more than 100 pounds and was 5-and-a-half to 6-feet in length. Wildlife biologists will take possession of the animal and conduct a necropsy.

Cougars, also known as mountain lions, were extirpated from Illinois before 1870 and are not protected by the Illinois Wildlife Code. There is no evidence that a resident breeding population exists in Illinois, but occasional transient cougars have been found in the state in recent years, likely dispersing from states to the west of Illinois, including South Dakota.

There were three confirmed cougars in Illinois between 2002 and 2008. A male was killed by a train in Randolph County in 2002. Another male was killed by a hunter in Mercer County in 2004. A third male was shot and killed on the north side of Chicago in 2008. Although analysis indicates these three animals were genetically similar to mountain lions from South Dakota, their history in the wild is uncertain.

More recently, images taken by trail cameras in Jo Daviess County (September 2012) and in Morgan, Pike and Calhoun counties (October and November 2012) were confirmed by IDNR as showing a live cougar. Given the long distances typically traveled by cougars, and the proximity of the counties (especially Calhoun, Morgan and Pike), it is possible that the camera images may show the same animal.

For more information on cougars, check the Living with Wildlife in Illinois website at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/wildlife/>

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